1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

162. relatively close settlement should be contrasted with conditions 60 years ago, when villages consisted of from 10 to 20 huts, with an average population of 100.[1] The size of villages now ranges from a few huts to 60 or more, with a total average population of about 40 per village, ranging from 15 to 200.

From a sample taken from three groups of hamlets in Liwonde district, it appears that the average gross reproduction rate over the last ten years has been about 2·9, while the net reproduction rate was about 2·2.[2]

Statistics are not available for the Yao population of Portuguese Nyasaland. Livingstone noted that at Mtarika's on the upper Ruvuma (not the town now on the Lujenda but an older one) there was an immense population. Mataka's town had about 1,000 houses, and there were many villages around.[3] The Yao fastnesses at Unangu and Mtonya were also thickly populated.[4] In the barren country south of the Ruvuma, between its confluence with the Lujenda and the beginning of the Makondi plateau, the country was almost uninhabited.[5]

In Tanganyika the Yao are distributed as follows:[6]

District	*Total population*	*Total children*
Tunduru	32,761	13,215
Masasi	13,009	5,048
Kilwa	8,980	1,616
Lindi	8,415	1,274
Mikindani	1,014	483
Songea	7,535	2,879
Dar es Salaam	1,869	230
Rufiji	1,013	189
Tukuyu	1,909	320
Other districts	2,377	820
	58,099	26,074

Percentage children to adults	*Percentage males to females*		*Increase since*	
	Adult	*Children*	*1928*	*1921*
51	91	113	19,855	34,699

LINGUISTIC DATA

147. The Yao language is spoken over an area extending from near the east coast of Africa to the east shore of Lake Nyasa, and from the sources of the Ruvuma in the north to the Lujenda in the south.[7] There are also two small pockets of Yao who crossed the lake to the west side, who speak their own language.

Duke classifies it as one of the group of Bantu languages in the East Central Zone, which constitutes a bridge between the languages of the East and Central Zones. He

[1] Macdonald, 1882, p. 191.
[2] 1931, pp. 68, 72.
[3] Thompson, 1882.
[4] Mitchell, 4.
[5] Maples, 6, 3, 1893.
[6] *Census of Native Population*, 1931, Table VI. There are also 4,832 people at Kilwa called Machinga, whose name indicates that they are probably of Yao origin.
[7] Hetherwick, 3, 1902, p. 108.

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places it in the same group of languages as Makua, Nkonde, and Tumbuka, but not with Makonde. He counts Nginda as a dialect of Yao.[1] Guthrie places it in the Makonde group, but not in the Makua-Lomwe group.[2]

The Yao language shows very little dialectical variation, which is attributed to the age-long Yao love of travel. Such differences as occur are found chiefly in accent or idiom, not in grammatical structure. There are five different divisions corresponding to the different branches of the tribe: (*a*) *Amahale*, near the sources of the Ruvuma; (*b*) *Mwembe*, near Mataka's, south of the Ruvuma; (*c*) *Mwanninga*, near the south end of Lake Nyasa; (*d*) *Mangoche*, near Blantyre; (*e*) *Machinga*, on Mounts Chikala and Zomba.[3]

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Yao boundary on the west, where they mix with Nyanja peoples of the east lake shore, is a line of hills about 1,500 ft. above the lake level, extending south to Mangoche. Starting north-east from the fertile valley of the Mandimba, there is a fairly level plain, watered by other tributaries of the Lujenda, as far as Mataka's and Mtarika. On the east side of the Luchilingo river there is a fairly continuous line of mountain fastnesses and hills, and from the source of the Mainje to its confluence with the Ruvuma, there are lines of fortresses to the east and west, traversed by steep mountain tracks. From the Mainje source to the Ruvuma the country is cut by deep streams and crowned by mountains 2,000 to 3,000 ft. high.[4] On the south bank of the Ruvuma, below the confluence with the Lujenda, the country is a semi-desert, with barren stony soil, little water, and plentiful game. The Yao also inhabit the western edge of the Makondi plateau, where the valley of the Ruvuma widens into a great plain. Here the sandstone of the Makondi plateau is denuded and the soil is barren and stony. The Makondi bush gives way to thin open forest of mimosa and other trees.[5] Most of the Yao country in the east of Portuguese East Africa is tsetse infested, but in the interior, approaching the east shore of Lake Nyasa, it is capable of supporting fine herds.[6]

South Nyasa district is mountainous in the east; the plain in the west stretches into Dedza and Ncheu districts. Owing to scarcity of water in the dry season this plain is thinly populated. The soil of the plain is sandy, except on the shore of the lake and the river bank, where it is rich alluvial soil; in the hilly parts the soil is clayish. During the last few years the lake level has risen and on the lake shore and the banks of the Shire river water is plentiful throughout the year. Smaller rivers have enough water all the year round to supply villages. The average annual rainfall at Fort Johnston is 33 in. for the last six rainy seasons, but the general average is 28 in. The average mean temperature is 73° F. The climate in the plains and at Fort Johnston is hot and trying in the hot season, but cooler on the hills. The greater part of upper Shire district is below 2,000 ft. in altitude and hot and unhealthy. In the dry weather most rivers are

[1] 1925, p. 63.
[2] 1948, p. 62. Naturally most of the earlier informants support Dale's classification, since they are mainly the sources on which it was based (Hetherwick, *op. cit.*, Meredith Henderson, 1905, p. viii). Affinity with the language of the Gulf of Guinea has been claimed for Yao by Dr. Albert Ehrard, of Innsbruck, quoted by Haddon, 1925, p. 9.
[3] Hetherwick, J. 1900, pp. xix–xx; c. 1893, p. 62.
[4] Thompson, 1880, pp. 67–78.
[5] Johnson, J. 1893.
[6] Hamilton, 1905, p. 12.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

Administration, but many cannot afford to do this. The people regard the taxes they pay to the Administration as a substitute for the chief's tribute. As the Native Authority the chief appears to be responsible for tax-collection, as the tax-clerk lives at the court.

The chief is responsible to the Administration, among other things, for latrine construction and for punishing the infringement of various regulations. His main duties are judicial, as judge of the Native Authority Court. The bureaucracy attached to the Native Authority includes a number of functionaries, e.g. Kawinga's, in 1947 one of the larger courts, had 1 court clerk, 1 assistant court clerk, 1 community worker, 1 forest guard, 1 agricultural demonstrator, 1 sanitary inspector, 9 court messengers, 2 caretakers, 4 gazetted men, 1 market clerk, 1 market sweeper, 6 court assessors. These are paid by the Native Treasury. Court assessors help in the arbitration of cases. The key position at court is held by the court clerk, and usually he is not a Yao, but an Nguru, who, because he is literate, is the medium of all written communications to and from the chief. The court sergeant is the correct channel of approach to the chief, and the court messengers represent the chief to the villages.

The territory of a Native Authority is divided into 'administrative villages', under officially recognized and paid headmen. Within these areas there are clusters of huts, which do not form officially recognized administrative units, but which are none the less villages under their own hereditary headmen. The administrative village headman is responsible for the payment of taxes in his area, and for the observance of various regulations. He is usually a man with some standing in the Yao social system: one who has the right to conduct a boys' initiation ceremony, or to wear the head-band signifying rank. His authority is derived partly from his status as a senior kinsman, partly from his status as a village headman. If the administrative village under him includes a number of hamlets unrelated to the administrative village headman, he will delegate his responsibilities in these hamlets to their own headmen. Consequently, since village headmen perform administrative duties, whether they are officially recognized or not, there is competition among them for the official posts. In order to bring pressure to bear on the chief to make him concede marks of rank, they may threaten to move out of his area, and so to deplete his following. In spite of this bargaining tool, the position of the village headman *vis-à-vis* the chief is said to be getting progressively weaker. Cases once tried by them are now being taken to the chief's court, and the latter is able to draw on the power of the Administration to establish his dominance over the headmen.

The chief in the modern *ajumbi* stands as the representative of the people to the white Administration, and as the representative of the white Administration to the people. One reason for the lack of direct contact between the Administration and the people is the fact that Yao is not the official language of the district, and therefore Yao interpreters are necessary.

There are some occasions when the chief and his officials perform the functions proper to their office under the old social system. The white Administration is not concerned with their ritual functions, nor with initiation rites, nor does it take cognizance of witchcraft offences. Accusations of witchcraft are judged by the same personnel as accusations of theft or adultery, but they are not dealt with in the court house, nor recorded in the book.

1: Stanner D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 ??? Yao ???

That these several sections of the Wayao differ in many respects may be seen by comparing the Amangochs of *Africana*[1] with the Amachinga of this article. I am not sufficiently conversant with the Amangochs to make a definite statement on this point but I am inclined to believe that after longer residence and wider knowledge, Macdonald would have found that some of his statements needed revision. Those whom he considered the "Yao proper" but whom I prefer to speak of as the Amangochs seem to have a considerable admixture of Anyanja, since their language contains many Chinyanja words and many of their customs are practically those of the Anyanja. I am of the opinion that the Amachinga may be regarded as more typical of the Wayao, and except where ambiguity might arise, I shall speak of them as the Yao.

The original home of this Bantu speaking people is uncertain; in historic times all the sections of the Wayao were originally grouped in that part of Portuguese East Africa around the hill called Chiwe, whence they probably derived their name, *Wa Chiwe* or *Wa Yao*. About the middle of the nineteenth century, as the result of inroads by neighbouring tribes of Ajisbo from the southeast, and raids by the Makwangwala, a branch of the Angoni of Zulu origin, from the northwest, disruption of the Yao people occurred, and the divisions mentioned above, moved toward Nyasaland. The Mawanga branch settled for the most part along the eastern shore of Lake Nyasa but a sub-section known as Tambala Yao reached the west side of the lake. The Machinga made a settlement near Lake Chirwa under a number of old chiefs, including Malewe, ; (Malowambe), Kawinga, Chembula, Kalimbuka, and Mazizi.

The descents of the Makwangwala again caused the Wayao to move on from Chirwa to Mwanga on the Mlinke stream. Here Malemya suffered another defeat at the hands of the Angoni; many of his people were driven off and taken to the neighbouring Angoni country where they were held in captivity for some time. Finally they were rescued by the enterprise of one of Malemya's old men, Kalungula, who went alone to the Angoni, saying that he wished to live with them and with his own brethren. One day, he asked the Angoni if they would like to see their captives dance, and when they assented, he called the Yao together, and clapping his hands to keep time, he began to sing one of their dance songs. Gradually he gathered all the Yao into the village open space, dancing and singing. Then, keeping to the same air, he told them why he had come, using their own language which the Angoni did not understand. "Malemya, our chief, remains at the Mlinke stream. It is not far off. We must all join him again. How dance for joy. If anyone does not return there, it is his own fault." Then, a few at a time, the dancers left the crowd and stole away into the bush and, as night came on, they all made off and reached Malemya's camp in safety.

Malemya's people were again attacked by the Angoni, and on this occasion they defeated their enemies. The Angoni retreated and skirting Zomba mountain, reached the Shire

7: Hetherwick M-S (ca. 1900) 1902 FT7 Tao FT7

with the dead. He approaches the shrine, opens the gate of the fence, takes a pinful of beer and pours it into the pot at the head of the grave. Next he places the basket of porridge and the plate of meat on the mound beside it and retires. Kneeling down outside the gate facing the shrine and a few yards in front of the people he chants his prayer in a monotone, each petition commencing with "Chombe, chombe," "Please, please." All the while the people clap their hands in unison with him and sing the responses as they do in a native cane in the chief's court.

When the offering has been made at the grave, the rest of the beer or other food is consumed by the worshippers. Guns are fired as a token of respect to the dead, and the rest of the day is spent in dancing.

Such shrines are to be seen in almost every Yao village where the inhabitants have been located for any length of time. They are regarded with awe—the little boys as they pass whisper to each other in a warning tone, "mzimu." Should the village be moved to any other district, the old shrine is not forgotten. Periodical visits are made to it with the usual offerings. In cases where the old home has been occupied by a people hostile to the old inhabitants, such visits are usually made during the night, and the people awoke in the morning to find that the old chief's grave in their midst has been newly repaired, and a fresh offering of food placed at its head.

Sometimes such shrines are found on the mountain of hills which once may have been a refuge from the enemy in time of war, but which now lie lone and deserted. Thither in their need the people make their way with their offering of food and beer, and their prayer for rain or suitable weather for the crops. Near Blantyre such shrines are to be seen on the tops of Mount Soche and Mount Michiru. The former is the abode of the spirit of Kankhomba, and the latter of Mpeleke, both old Maravi or Mang'anja chiefs who doubtless fled there seeking safety from the war of the invading Yaos, and died leaving their wraiths to be the mulungu or spirit of the mountain. Some years ago, during the hour of an August invasion, the Yaos of Mount Soche fled to the hill-top for refuge, and there the old chief Kapasi died. He was buried close to the grave of the old Kankhomba, and now, when the Yaos on Soche make an offering, it is to the spirit of Kapasi that the homage is paid, and the shrine of Kankhomba lies neglected.

Only the graves of chiefs or headmen are thus treated as shrines of worship. The burying place of slaves and the common people lies away in the thick bush, where only the rank grass or the thicket of old trees marks the spot. No offerings are ever taken there, for such as are buried there can have no influence in the spirit world. The dead are buried, the broken pot or basket is left on the grave to mark the spot, and none ever seek to go there more to lay another in the same neglected ground.

II. But the word mulungu is used by the Yao with a wider application. Etymologically the word is connected with the root kulanga, which in so many of the other branches of the Bantu tongue appears as kola or kora, and signifies "great" or "old." It is the same root which appears in the Kaffir word for God,

7: Hetherwick M-5 (ca. 1900) 1902 FT7 Yao FT7

Ukulumkulu, which may therefore be rendered as "The old, old One," or "The great, great One." A like rendering may be given of the Yao form *mulungu*, the "Old One," or the "Great One." In this or a modified form *mungo* (Swahili) it appears in all the Eastern group of the Bantu tongues as the equivalent for "God" (see Father Torrend's *Comparative Grammar of South African Bantu Languages*). To trace it as Father Torrend does to any connection with Moloch, the god of the Phœnicians, is to attach undue weight to a chance coincidence of sounds.

As we have already seen, the word *mulungu* is applied to the human limbs when regarded as an object of worship, or as an inhabitant of the spirit world. But it is also used to denote that spirit world in general, or more properly speaking, *the aggregate of the spirits of all the dead*. The plural form of the word is rarely heard, unless when the allusion is made to the souls in their individualities. In its native use and form the word does not imply personality, for it does not belong to the personal class of nouns. Etymologically it is classed with the leg, heart, arm, head, etc., of the human frame. Its form denotes rather a state or property inhering in something, as the life or health inherent in the body. Among the various tribes where the word is in use as we have described, the missionaries have adopted it as the term for "God." But the untaught Yao refuses to assign to it any idea of being or personality. It is to him more a *quality or faculty* of the human nature whose signification he has extended so as to embrace the whole spirit world. Once after I had endeavoured to impress an old Yao headman with the personality of the Godhead in the Christian sense of the term, using the term *Mulungu*, my listener began to talk of "Che Mulungu," "Mr. God," showing that originally to him the word conveyed *no idea of the personality* I was ascribing to it.

And yet the Yao approaches closely to the idea of personality and a personal being, when he speaks of what *mulungu* has done and is doing. It is *mulungu* who made the world, and men, and animals. Far in the interior of the continent, toward the north-west, beyond the plains and swamps of the Lourgwa River and Lake Bangweolo, there lies, in Yao legend, an island in the midst of a lake called Kapitilanya. On that island there is to be seen a large flat rock marked by the footprints of men and animals of all kinds. When that rock was once a heap of moist clay, *mulungu* created all living things and sent them across the soft mass, where their footprints remained to be afterwards hardened into the imperishable rock. Such is the Yao legend of the creation of the world, and *mulungu* is always the Great Creator.

Mulungu is also regarded as the agent in anything mysterious. "It's *mulungu*," is the Yao exclamation on being shown anything that is beyond the range of his understanding. The rainbow is always "*mulungu*," although some Yaos have begun to use the Mang'anja term "*utta wa Lemo*," bow of Lord.

Offerings are made to the spirit world or to *mulungu* as the great agency in the affairs of human life. Outside the village, or beside the headman's hut, may often be seen a rough shed. In this are placed the first-fruits of the new crop,

9 Lawson T-5 (ca. 1941)1943 FT? Yao FT?
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and Yao tribes, who there predominate. These peoples seem to have come from different parts of the continent. Their languages, despite a common Bantu descent and much recent borrowing, remain as distinct as possible and are obviously not modern dialects of one more primitive tongue; their original social structures must, however, have been similar enough to attract them to each other, for they have so intermarried and their customs so fused, that one can now scarcely distinguish their ways of life and village organization. Indeed, while homesteads of apparently pure Nyanja and Yao still predominate, every considerable district contains members of both tribes, with some people, at least, of mixed descent; moreover, and although one perceives a difference of character and manners, and owes it to the influence of Mohammedanism on the Yao, one may well be unconsciously exaggerating. This account of relationship terms, (with brief reference to underlying social structure), must be taken, therefore, to cover the fusion of two once-separate tribes, and Nyanja and Yao equivalents must—unless otherwise stated—be understood as identical in meaning. In fact, Nyanja often prefer Yao terms to their own.

How far can one isolate the Nyanja-Yao social structure in order to study it? Ngoni immigrants in this district are few, and their original patrilineal social system has largely succumbed to the customs of these earlier comers. The matrilineal system of the still more recent and numerous Lomwe immigrants is, I believe, (though my evidence is fragmentary), exerting a considerable influence on the somewhat dissimilar but also matrilineal Nyanja and Yao.